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## Environmental streamlining effort well underway

*By Emmer Shields, Chair LRSC Regulatory, Environmental and Legislative (REAL) Committee*

Since the inception of the Local Roads and Streets Council (LRSC), the issue of regulatory reform has been identified as a priority issue. Virtually all local government representatives on the LRSC agreed that environmental regulation is an area that should be studied. A general feeling existed among the Council's local government membership that the approach to environmental regulation of transportation projects, and the interaction between local governments and regulatory agencies, were not serving the best interests of Wisconsin's transportation system, environment or citizenry. There had to be a better approach to the often frustrating and time consuming methods being employed into something that would better serve all public interests.

For years, we did a fair job identifying problem areas, but few solutions were forthcoming. The LRSC's Delivery Cost Study Group identified problem areas and made recommendations on changes that could be made on local projects administered by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT). This effort continues today with the WisDOT Secretary's Committee on Local Program Streamlining (SCOLPS). However, the vast majority of local projects are completed with local funds and these projects were not part of these early and ongoing efforts. It was clear that meaningful reforms to the regulations governing these locally funded projects were in order. Fortunately, that effort has begun and major progress has been made.

As the REAL Committee wondered how to initiate a reform effort, similar discussions were taking place within the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR), where staff charged with the oversight responsibilities also wondered

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*Frank Busalacchi, Secretary, Wisconsin Department of Transportation*

## Message from WisDOT Secretary Frank Busalacchi

Now that the 2003–2005 state budget has been signed into law, citizens and groups throughout the state continue sorting through the details to determine how the budget will impact various services and programs. I would like to use this opportunity to discuss some of the key budget provisions—particularly how the budget will impact local and statewide transportation.

We are all aware of the enormous fiscal challenge that Governor Doyle faced—erasing a \$3.2 billion deficit while sticking to his goals: not raising taxes; distributing cuts fairly; protecting critical local services, education, health care and the environment; making government more efficient; and doing the job once and doing it right.

Despite these formidable challenges, the Governor clearly recognizes that a quality transportation system is the “driving force” behind a healthy economy. With that in mind, and despite cuts to many other programs, the Governor's

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*Don Kush, Council Chair, Senior Planner, West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission*

## Message from Council Chair Don Kush

As autumn winds down, it's time again to be finalizing your local road inspections and preparing your road condition data. At this time, I would like to provide a reminder to all local communities for the need to submit your local road condition report to WisDOT by December 15th of this year (*see related article*). The condition report will again follow the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) system and will provide yet another update to the local road data base contained in the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR).

Considering the phenomenal 99% response to the first such undertaking in 2001, this current data collection cycle should not present many difficulties to local units of government. However, if your local unit of government experienced a loss of key personnel involved in this process, or may have added personnel who are not familiar with the PASER rating system, help is a phone call away. Again, as in 2001,

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## Environmental streaming effort well underway

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how to reform the current procedures. Many DNR regulatory staff also recognized that current regulatory approaches were not serving the public interest very well and change was overdue. Whether by chance or by good fortune, the LRSC's REAL Committee and the DNR's WisDOT Liaison began discussions that have provided the opportunity to institute some truly progressive and needed changes.

The first step was to identify what problems existed within the current regulatory process. It became clear that neither the environment nor transportation were being well served through the existing procedures. Desired outcomes were not being achieved with the current process and often a great cost in public resources was being incurred. After a lengthy list of specific problems were identified and cataloged, it became clear that these were symptoms of the problem, not the root cause. The root cause of the problems could be summed up in a single word—"process." The processes that were devised to deliver and regulate transportation projects were at fault. It was not lack of technology, setting impossible goals or bad intentions, but a failure to recognize that a process had been created that was making poor use of our most important commodity—the people serving the public interest.

The REAL Committee identified six categories that needed to be addressed:

- Process time needs to be reduced
- Process costs need to be reduced
- Process needs to be simplified
- Need to build trust and partnership between DNR and local governments
- Need to improve local government's role in protecting the environment
- Need to improve the DNR's effectiveness in reaching environmental protection goals

Key to achieving any and all of these efforts was to better utilize the human resources we collectively have and to work cooperatively to meet mutual goals. There was recognition that both transportation and the environment are public interests of the highest order, that these interests are not competing or adversarial entities, and that as public servants cooperation

and commitment should be the norm when two public interests converge.

The REAL Committee developed a list of recommendations and solutions for process change. It was clear to the committee that for any solutions to be implemented, a broader group of individuals representing transportation and the environment would have to be brought together to brainstorm and test ideas. This led to the development of a working conference held in March 2003 at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. The workshop was entitled "Transportation and the Environment: Promoting and Protecting the Public Interest." Over 45 participants representing local government, DNR, WisDOT and outside stakeholders were in attendance. WisDOT Secretary Frank Busalacchi, DNR Secretary Scott Hassett and Federal Highway Administration Division Administrator Bruce Matzke gave opening remarks to kick off the conference.

After a long day of facilitated round table discussions, the participants presented their recommended solutions to current process issues. Two solutions that were identified by all participants as having the most promise were:

- creation of single points of contact to ensure that one DNR representative would be the point person with local governments as a project weaves its way through the environmental permitting process; and
- education, outreach and training with DNR staff and local government representatives to enhance awareness and understanding of regulations and individual perspectives.

At present the REAL Committee, in concert with the DNR, is fleshing out a proposal for serious and extensive reforms to be implemented based on the recommendations from the conference. These reforms will require significant and long-term commitments from both local governments and the DNR. Both local governments and DNR will have to support the effort or it will have no opportunity for success. Many barriers exist to implementation; greatest of these is the fear of change. Yet we have a tremendous opportunity to fundamentally change the way DNR and local governments interact on transportation projects. If we as public servants can effectively follow through, the environment, transportation and citizens will be the big winners. I hope you will follow our continued progress on these issues in upcoming LRSC newsletters.

## Secretary's Message

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budget plan actually called for a 2 ½% increase in key transportation programs including General Transportation Aids (GTA), the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP), public transit and State trunk highway maintenance and operations.

However, during the budget deliberations that followed, legislators ultimately decided to eliminate these inflationary increases which will have an effect on services provided by these programs. The Legislature's dramatic cuts in State trunk highway maintenance and operations' funding are particularly troubling and will have an impact on the traveling public. Despite his extensive veto authority, the Governor was unable to affect these legislative changes. As Secretary of a major state agency, I certainly understand and appreciate how the current budgetary climate creates difficulties not only for our department, but also for our partners on the local level—especially as costs for labor, materials and other items continue to rise. At the same time, we are being further challenged to find innovative ways to do even more with even less. The same belt-tightening that is impacting businesses and families throughout the state and nation also applies to state and local governments.

Yet I remain confident that thanks to the strengths of our state/local partnerships forged over the years, we can and must find ways to address these and other challenges. It's important to keep in mind that over the 2003–2005 state budget period, funding for GTA will still total some \$747 million, while LRIP funding will total approximately \$45 million. Overall, the approved state budget actually spends \$77 million more on transportation than the last biennium and we expect no delays to occur with out-state transportation projects.

Wisconsin's motto is "Forward." More than ever before, we will be turning to our many partners including all those associated with the Local Roads and Streets Council, to come up with innovative and practical solutions that continue to advance our economically-vital transportation system. I very much appreciate your willingness to work with us and I look "forward" to finding ways to meet our transportation needs while adhering to the budget blueprint that has been set before us.



*Edison Street, in the City of Marshfield, was reconstructed with city and Local Roads Improvement Program funds.*

## 2004–05 Local Roads Improvement Program gearing up

Applications for 2004–05 funding through the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) were due to county highway commissioners by November 1, 2003. After reviewing the information for eligibility, accuracy and thoroughness, commissioners forward applications to WisDOT no later than January 15, 2004. March 15, 2004 is the target date for WisDOT to complete their review of the applications and forward signed project agreements to applicants.

Some program reminders as you prepare for your LRIP project:

- a) You must wait until you receive the project agreement from WisDOT before awarding a contract funded with LRIP dollars.
- b) Advertise for bids as a Class Two notice, which requires an advertisement during two consecutive weeks. The ad must identify the project as funded with LRIP dollars. Keep a copy of the advertisements as documentation that the Class Two requirement has been met. Or better yet, get an *Affidavit of Publication* from the newspaper for \$1, which includes the advertisement and identifies the advertising dates and newspaper.
- c) All LRIP projects must be designed based on a minimum 10-year design life. Projects with a total cost over \$65,000 require an Engineer Certification stating that the project is designed based on a 10-year design life. The LRIP Informational Packet includes an example of a certification.

- d) LRIP projects must meet minimum roadway standards. County projects must meet the standards included in Wisconsin Administrative Rule Trans 205, city and village projects must meet the standards in Chapter 11-20-1 of the WisDOT Facilities Development Manual (FDM), and town projects must meet the standards in Wisconsin Administrative Rule Trans 204. If you have good reasons why these standards can't be met, you need to provide a written request for an Exception to Standards with your local WisDOT district director and send a courtesy copy to the LRIP Program Manager.
- e) LRIP is a reimbursement program. As such, you must pay the contractor prior to requesting reimbursement from WisDOT.
- f) Please contact your county highway commissioner with your LRIP questions.

## LRIP summary report available

The summary report of the Local Roads Improvement Program (LRIP) for State Fiscal Years 2002–2003 is available on the WisDOT Web site. The report includes a complete listing of over 1,200 projects funded during the biennium. To save on printing and mailing costs, the report—for the first time—is available exclusively on the Web. Please look for the report at <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/lrip.htm>

## Council Chair's message

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Regional Planning Commissions, County Highway Departments, UW Extension Services and many private consultants are available to assist you with your training needs in the use of the PASER system. Some of these agencies may also be available to assist you in rating the condition of your roads. PASER manuals and training materials are also available free of charge from the UW-Transportation Information Center (UW-TIC). Please contact the UW-TIC at (800) 442-4615 to request copies of these manuals. Manuals are available for concrete, asphalt, sealcoat, brick & block, gravel and unimproved (earth) surfaces.

The pavement condition data is critical for understanding statewide conditions and needs. This data will be especially timely as WisDOT begins to prepare the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan for the state of Wisconsin. Together I hope we can meet or surpass the 99% rate from 2001.

## Estimated CY 2004 General Transportation Aids announced

WisDOT announced the estimated calendar year (CY) 2004 General Transportation Aids (GTA) figures on October 1, 2003. The department will release final figures for CY 2004 on December 19, 2003. The 2003–05 State Biennial Budget provided the same statewide appropriation for CY 2004 that was in place for CY 2003. While there weren't any increases provided for next year, the mileage and cost formulas are still active in determining aid payments. The CY 2004 "rate per mile" for eligible municipalities will be \$1,825 per mile.

GTA is provided to all 1,922 towns, villages, cities and counties in the state through quarterly payments provided on the first Monday of January, April, July and October. Please refer to the GTA home page on the WisDOT Web site for additional GTA information: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/gta.htm>

## New council members named

The Local Roads and Streets Council is pleased to welcome three new members to the council. We appreciate their commitment to local road issues and look forward to their contributions. Members joining the council in July 2003 include:

### Representing the League of Wisconsin Municipalities:

- **Bill Beil, Jr.**, Director of Public Works with the City of Abbottsford

### Representing the Wisconsin Alliance of Cities:

- **David Botts**, Director of Public Works with the City of Beloit
- **Paula Vandehey**, Director of Public Works with the City of Appleton

## Local federal aid transportation programs: approval update

WisDOT recently approved the 2005–07 Surface Transportation Program (STP)-Urban federal aid program. This program provides funding to complete a variety of improvements to federal-aid-eligible roads and streets in urban areas.

The approved STP-Urban projects list was forwarded to WisDOT district offices on October 20, 2003 to share with local communities by October 31, 2003. The 2005–07 STP-Urban approved projects list is now available to consultants and others via the WisDOT Web site at [www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/approved.htm](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/highways/approved.htm)

The successful approval of the 2005–07 STP-Urban program marks the implementation of Wisconsin's automated entitlement process for project requests and subsequent ranking, analysis and program approval. This process allows WisDOT to provide greater program consistency, increased efficiency in program delivery, and enhanced capabilities for program reporting and tracking. Final approval of the federal STP-Rural and Local Bridge programs is in process. If you have any questions about the status of these programs, please contact Steve Coons with WisDOT at (608) 267-4459 or [steven.coons@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:steven.coons@dot.state.wi.us)

## E & C Committee coordinates council information

The purpose of the Education and Communications (E & C) Committee of the Local Roads and Streets Council is to promote awareness of the functions of the LRSC through newsletters, biennial reports, Web pages and training. Current committee members include LRSC Vice-Chair and E&C Chair Dave Waffle (City of Reedsburg), Jeff Mantes (City of Milwaukee) and Ann Schell (East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission), with input from the LRSC Executive Committee. Committee members do not have to be members of the LRSC and are welcome from any local unit of government, regional planning commission or WisDOT staff. Application to the committee is made through LRSC Chair Don Kush.

The committee works closely with WisDOT staff to produce the quarterly LRSC newsletter. The newsletter is e-mailed to more than 1,100 people around the state along with being available on the department's Web site at <http://www.dot.state.wi.us/localgov/lrsc/newsletters.htm>. The standing committees of the LRSC take turns writing a newsletter article profiling committee membership and activities. The

newsletter is also used to communicate important news about transportation programs for local government. Each edition also features columns written by the WisDOT Secretary and the LRSC Chair.

Every other year LRSC produces a biennial report on council and committee activities. The current report is still in production. As with many of the publications of the LRSC, the biennial report is created in cooperation with staff from the WisDOT Office of Public Affairs. The committee also provides advice to the department for promotion and training for activities such as the WISLR program for recording local road and street data. Some activities are conducted in conjunction with other groups.

The recent addition of "Programs for Local Government" to the WisDOT Web page is a welcome development. There is a quick summary and index to information on Highways and Bridges, Public Transportation, and Other Assistance Programs for towns, villages, cities and counties in Wisconsin. Other links on the "Programs for Local Government" direct you to the LRSC homepage, the WISLR program and the Secretary's Committee on Local Program Streamlining (SCOLPS). The Web address is <http://www.dot.state.wi.us/localgov/index.htm>

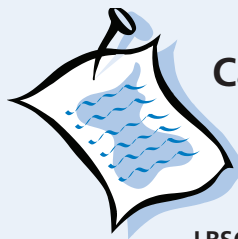
## Pavement rating deadline quickly approaching: December 15, 2003

Many of you may be aware of the upcoming deadline to comply with State Statue 86.302 (2), the submission of pavement ratings to WisDOT every two years. If you have not already done so, we strongly encourage you to submit your pavement ratings by the December 15, 2003 deadline.

WisDOT experienced a 99% rate of compliance with the statutory requirement in 2001. The department has been receiving rating submittals from many municipalities. If you have any questions regarding pavement rating submittals, please refer to the instructions provided in your pavement rating packet, or you may contact Crystal Van Woelden at (608) 266-7135, or by e-mail at [downloadinfo@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:downloadinfo@dot.state.wi.us)

## How WISLR can help you

A brochure available on the WisDOT Web site illustrates how the Wisconsin Information System for Local Roads (WISLR) can assist local governments in the decision making process. WISLR is the name of the updated local road database that stores data on the 100,000-mile network of town roads, city and village streets and county highways across Wisconsin. The brochure provides step-by-step instructions for logging onto WISLR and reviews the data, mapping and analysis tool available through the system. You can read more about WISLR and view the brochure at the WISLR home page: <http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/wislr/index.htm>



## Calendar of events

Below are meetings and training events related to the local road network in Wisconsin. Please submit events for inclusion in future LRSC newsletters to [lrsc@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:lrsc@dot.state.wi.us)

**Local Roads and Streets Council meetings** are held every other month in the city council chambers in Wisconsin Rapids beginning at 9 a.m. The tentative 2004 schedule includes meetings on January 22, March 25, May 27, July 22, September 23 and December 2. Interested people are invited to attend council meetings. Various LRSC Committee meetings are also typically held every other month in locations around the state. Please contact WisDOT's Kathryn Andren at [kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us) or (608) 267-0448 to confirm meeting dates and times.

**November 20, 2003:** Sidewalk Management course (10:30 a.m.–12:20 p.m.) provided by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Local Government Center as part of their 2003–04 WisLine Teleconference (formerly known as ETN) Series. Please contact the UW-Extension at (608) 262-9961 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.uwex.edu/lgc>

**December 12, 2003:** Bidding Local Road Projects course (10:30 a.m.–12:20 p.m.) provided by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Local Government Center as part of their 2003–04 WisLine Teleconference Series. Please contact the UW-Extension at (608) 262-9961 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.uwex.edu/lgc>

**January 8, 2004:** Liability and Legal Issues course (10:30 a.m.–12:20 p.m.) provided by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Local Government Center as part of their 2003–04 WisLine Teleconference Series. Please contact the UW-Extension at (608) 262-9961 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.uwex.edu/lgc>

**January 20, 21, 22, 23, 28, 29 & 30, 2004:** One day Work Zone and Flagger Safety workshops provided by the University of Wisconsin Transportation Information Center (UW-TIC) at seven sites across the state. Please contact the UW-TIC at (800) 442-4615 for questions and registration or go to their Web site at <http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/workshops.lasso#workshops>

**January 27–28, 2004:** Wisconsin County Highway Association, Winter Conference, Appleton. For additional information, please visit the WCHA Web site at <http://www.wcha.ticonet/>

**February 12, 2004:** The Transportation Element in Comprehensive Planning #1699-4 course (10:30 a.m.–11:50 a.m.) provided by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Local Government Center as part of their 2003–04 WisLine Teleconference Series. Please contact the UW-Extension at (608) 262-9961 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.uwex.edu/lgc>

**February 13, 2004:** Local Transportation Funding course (10:30 a.m.–12:20 p.m.) provided by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Local Government Center as part of their 2003–04 WisLine Teleconference Series. Please contact the UW-Extension at (608) 262-9961 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.uwex.edu/lgc>

### February 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 23 & 24, 2004:

One day Highway Safety workshops provided by the University of Wisconsin Transportation Information Center (UW-TIC) at seven sites across the state. Please contact the UW-TIC at (800) 442-4615 for questions and registration or go to their Web site at <http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/workshops.lasso#workshops>

**March 4, 2004:** Using Stone on Roadway Projects course (10:30 a.m.–12:20 p.m.) provided by the University of Wisconsin-Extension Local Government Center as part of their 2003–04 WisLine Teleconference Series. Please contact the UW-Extension at (608) 262-9961 for questions or go to their Web site at <http://www.uwex.edu/lgc>

### March 11, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18 & 19, 2004:

One day Road Maintenance workshops provided by the University of Wisconsin Transportation Information Center (UW-TIC) at seven sites across the state. Please contact the UW-TIC at (800) 442-4615 for questions and registration or go to their Web site at <http://tic.engr.wisc.edu/workshops.lasso#workshops>

## Electronic newsletter

The Local Roads and Streets Council newsletter is available exclusively in an electronic format.

The newsletter is sent via e-mail to the addresses we have on file in our newsletter distribution list. The newsletter is also available on the Internet through the WisDOT Web site at [www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/lrsc/newsletters.htm](http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/localgov/lrsc/newsletters.htm)

Copies of previous issues of the newsletter are also available on the Internet at the same address. To add or change e-mail addresses in the newsletter distribution list, please contact the LRSC via e-mail at [lrsc@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:lrsc@dot.state.wi.us) or contact WisDOT's Kathryn Andren at (608) 267-0448 or [kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:kathryn.andren@dot.state.wi.us)

## Questions

Please e-mail the council with your questions

at [lrsc@dot.state.wi.us](mailto:lrsc@dot.state.wi.us) or contact:

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